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In the chapter Metaphysics and Religion the biographer neatly hits off the humor of Spencer's attempt in *First Principles*, to deal with problems so far beyond his competence that he chiefly makes the impression of having imperfectly learned what Sir William Hamilton had so convincingly taught. "If 'the Unknowable' is really unknowable, there is surely nothing more to be said about it; and the ascription of various attributes to the Unknowable is in reality a sufficient condemnation of the whole doctrine" (p. 217).

After all the drawbacks are charged off, it still remains true that men who are able to be more critical than credulous may add cubits to their mental stature by studying the *Synthetic Philosophy*. If one is wavering about the value of such study, Mr. Elliot's book would almost surely remove the doubts, and it might most profitably be used as the brief for the respondent.

ALBION W. SMALL.

*Portraits of the Seventies.* By the Right Hon. GEORGE W. E. RUSSELL. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1916. Pp. 485. \$3.75.)

OBVIOUSLY from what Mr. Russell tells us in a frankly written preface to *Portraits of the Seventies*, publishers in London regard his intimate knowledge of English politics of the last forty years and of English society of the same period as a valuable asset. There are readers of his books and of his contributions to the periodical press, especially readers who recall his contributions to the *Manchester Guardian*, who also appraise quite highly his peculiar and intimate knowledge of English politics, and his ability to write on English politics, which comes partly from the fullness of his knowledge. There is no man in England to-day—no man who has made any position for himself as a writer—who is better acquainted than Mr. Russell with the history of the Whig party from the Reform Act of 1832 to the eclipse of Whiggism that resulted from the extension of the parliamentary franchise in 1884-1885, and the epoch-making division in the Liberal party over Gladstone's bill for Home Rule for Ireland of 1886. Mr. Russell was born into the Whig cult. He was on terms of intimacy with most of the prominent men of the Whig party from 1867 to 1886, and while all through his political career he has been a convinced believer in democracy, he is steeped in the history and traditions of Whiggism. It seems never to have occurred to any London publisher to attempt to draw on this particular vein of Mr. Russell's store of political information. It may be that there is to-day little popular interest in the achievements of the Whig party; for since 1886 a new generation has come on to the electoral rolls in England to which Whiggism is not even a name or a tradition.

Mr. Fisher Unwin's request to Mr. Russell—as he tells us in his unconventional preface—was for a book about people eminent in the

seventies and eighties, as a sequel to Justin McCarthy's *Portraits of the Sixties*; and *Portraits of the Seventies* is the result. It scarcely need be said that the book is extremely readable. Readableness has always been a characteristic of Mr. Russell's writings. But in a volume of not more than 120,000 words, he draws no fewer than fifty-five portraits. They are of women as well as of men; for while the larger part of Mr. Russell's book is devoted to men who later were his contemporaries in Parliament when he was of the House of Commons from 1880 to 1895, he writes also of bishops and clergymen of the Established Church, of dignitaries and priests of the Roman Catholic Church in England, of poets and physicians, of the wives of statesmen, and of other women who in the seventies and eighties were famous as hostesses. Almost necessarily in a comparatively small book carrying so many portraits, there is in some of the shorter sketches a flavor of what in the jargon of Fleet Street would be described as "mainly about people" stuff. But as has been indicated it is the statesmen and politicians of the seventies and eighties who receive most detailed attention at Mr. Russell's hands. He is generous in the proportion of his book allotted to these men; and from the point of view of a contribution to the literature of English politics in the nineteenth century *Portraits of the Seventies* will always have a value for the side-lights thrown on Beaconsfield, Gladstone, Sherbrooke, Salisbury, Devonshire, Argyll, Bright, Chamberlain, Churchill, and Parnell. There are fifty-two reproductions of photographs or portraits, but there is no index.

E. P.

*The Rise of Rail-Power in War and Conquest, 1833-1914.* By EDWIN A. PRATT. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1916. Pp. xii, 405. \$2.50.)

THE latest of Pratt's works on the character and development of railway transportation, in presenting an historical survey of the scientific utilization of the modern railway for purposes of war and conquest, is a very timely book. The tremendous task of all of the European belligerents in concentrating unparalleled numbers of troops, in providing vast armies with supplies and munitions of well-nigh limitless quantity, in maintaining lines of communication of unprecedented length and difficulty, in removing from the zones of war hundreds of thousands of prisoners and as many wounded men of varying degrees of disability, in protecting their systems of transport against the newer weapons of this war, particularly against the aggressive manoeuvres of alert air fleets, and more especially, the marvellous flexibility of the German war machine in maintaining an active resistance and a vigorous offensive on a multiple of fronts, have emphasized as never before the fact that railway transportation plays as indispensable a rôle in the successful prosecution of modern warfare as it does in the peaceful development of modern industrial society. But while *The Rise of Rail-Power in*